

## ST. MARY OF NAZARETH /ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI – WEST WICKHAM

8<sup>th</sup> January 2023: Epiphany

### Hazel writes:

I had a surprise this week when I received a card from Buckingham Palace in response to mine about our book of condolence for the death of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. This will be displayed in the churches this week and next.



Next **Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> January**, we will have Holy Communion services at 8am and 9.15am in St Mary's Church and at 10.45am in St Francis' Church.

**Morning Prayer** is held each week in St Francis' Church on Wednesday morning at 9.30am, followed by the church being **open for private prayer** from 10.30-11.30am. It is also held at St Mary's Church on Thursday morning at 9am.

**Resources and updates for the week ahead** – Each week our service is livestreamed on YouTube at 10am or before. All other files for this week have been combined and included in this pew sheet which will be sent on paper to those who have told us that they are not on-line.

The **Bereavement Support Group** will meet on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> January at 2.30pm in Emmanuel Church, The Grove, West Wickham.

**Messy Church** is this week on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> January at 3.45pm in St Mary's Church with craft, games, a story, a song and food for all the family.

A **qualified and experienced carer** known to our pastoral care team has some free time when she could take on another client, including help with things such as: personal care; food preparation; shopping; assistance with walking; laundry, ironing and some

cleaning. If you, or someone you know, might benefit from some more help around the home, do call Izabela on 07761 326618.

You can get a free life-saving **home safety check** from the London Fire Brigade who will visit your home and do a fire safety check, including providing a free smoke alarm if necessary. This is especially helpful if you have mobility issues, including the housebound. Please do let others know about this. You can get more detail at <https://www.london-fire.gov.uk/safety/the-home/home-fire-safety-visits/>

Our next **women's event** is on Tuesday 17th January at 8pm in St Francis' Church. We will be using chocolate as an introduction to contemplative prayer and a brief reflection on Hazel's sabbatical exploring how being more contemplative in life may help to be less stressed. There will be an opportunity to try out a short meditation and find the benefit of some regular quiet time. All are welcome. Do bring a friend.

**Richard's sermon last week** included some suggestions for ways to benefit our *spiritual* health in 2023:

- Spending more time reading the Bible. If you want help with this, then talk to Hazel or Ken or Brian or myself.
- Spending more time in prayer, perhaps by setting aside a particular time each day for this, or joining us at the Morning Prayer services held on Wednesday and Thursday mornings at St Francis and St Mary's respectively.
- Helping with Messy Church once a month on a Friday afternoon –the first of these is this Friday 13<sup>th</sup> at 3.45pm in St Mary's. All are welcome.
- Joining a home group.

As we stand on the verge of a new year, God's challenge to us is what we will contribute to a relationship in which we became God's offspring and his heirs. May it be a happy and spiritually prosperous New Year for you all.

**Churches Together in West Wickham** are opening up **Warm Spaces** on five days each week (normally 9am-5pm) providing somewhere warm for people to meet in for free. If you could help with this for a couple of hours on a rota basis, please contact the following:

- For a Monday – Jon Hills ([jon@wwsbc.org.uk](mailto:jon@wwsbc.org.uk) or 020 8777 5705) at West Wickham & Shirley Baptist Church
- For a Tuesday – Ian Hamlin ([ianh2102@hotmail.com](mailto:ianh2102@hotmail.com) or 07543 561868) at Coney Hill Baptist Church

- For a Wednesday - Kate Dyer ([katedyer41@hotmail.com](mailto:katedyer41@hotmail.com) or 07808 468591) or Nicky Nightingale ([nicholanightingale@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:nicholanightingale@hotmail.co.uk) or 8916 9855) at St Francis' Church
- For a Thursday – Laura MacBean ([laura.macbean@googlemail.com](mailto:laura.macbean@googlemail.com)) at West Wickham Methodist Church
- For a Friday – Pat Best ([patbest@btinternet.com](mailto:patbest@btinternet.com) or 020 8464 7208) at Emmanuel United Reformed Church

Please bring **Foodbank donations** to the Vicarage or St Francis' Church. Currently they require milk (long life), coffee, sweets, cooking sauces, soup, rice, tinned potatoes and other vegetables. They are well stocked with pasta, cereal, tea and biscuits. Please do not bring any fresh or frozen food, or baby milk as the foodbank cannot pass this on. You can also donate financially here: <https://bromleyborough.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-money>. Thank you for your continuing support.

If anyone would like a pedestal at either church in memory of a loved one or to commemorate a special anniversary etc., please contact Merri Womack (8777 8772) for St Mary's (or there is a list to sign in the vestibule at St. Mary's) or Nicky Nightingale ([nicholanightingale@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:nicholanightingale@hotmail.co.uk) or 8916 9855) for St Francis'.

The sanctuary pedestal this week at St. Marys has been provided by Margaret Bond in memory of Richard and has been arranged by Beryl.

Any items for the joint pew sheet to Beryl [berylbolton@hotmail.com](mailto:berylbolton@hotmail.com) and items for the websites to [brian.griff19@btinternet.com](mailto:brian.griff19@btinternet.com) or Gifty [office@stmarywestwickham.co.uk](mailto:office@stmarywestwickham.co.uk).

**Collect**

Creator of the heavens,  
 who led the Magi by a  
 star to worship the  
 Christ-child:  
 guide and sustain us,  
 that we may find our  
 journey's end  
 in Jesus Christ our Lord.

**First Reading:****Ephesians 3:1-12**

This is the reason that I  
 Paul am a prisoner  
 for Christ Jesus for the  
 sake of you Gentiles—  
<sup>2</sup> for surely you have  
 already heard of the  
 commission of God's  
 grace that was given to  
 me for you, <sup>3</sup> and how  
 the mystery was made  
 known to me by  
 revelation, as I wrote  
 above in a few  
 words, <sup>4</sup> a reading of  
 which will enable you to  
 perceive my  
 understanding of the  
 mystery of Christ. <sup>5</sup> In  
 former generations this  
 mystery was not made  
 known to humankind, as

it has now been  
 revealed to his holy  
 apostles and prophets  
 by the Spirit: <sup>6</sup> that is,  
 the Gentiles have  
 become fellow-heirs,  
 members of the same  
 body, and sharers in the  
 promise in Christ Jesus  
 through the gospel. <sup>7</sup> Of  
 this gospel I have  
 become a servant  
 according to the gift of  
 God's grace that was  
 given to me by the  
 working of his  
 power. <sup>8</sup> Although I am  
 the very least of all the  
 saints, this grace was  
 given to me to bring to  
 the Gentiles the news of  
 the boundless riches of  
 Christ, <sup>9</sup> and to make  
 everyone see what is  
 the plan of the mystery  
 hidden for ages in God  
 who created all  
 things; <sup>10</sup> so that  
 through the church the  
 wisdom of God in its rich  
 variety might now be  
 made known to the  
 rulers and authorities in

the heavenly  
 places. <sup>11</sup> This was in  
 accordance with the  
 eternal purpose that he  
 has carried out in Christ  
 Jesus our Lord, <sup>12</sup> in  
 whom we have access  
 to God in boldness and  
 confidence through faith  
 in him.

**Gospel Reading****Matthew 2:1-12**

In the time of King  
 Herod, after Jesus was  
 born in Bethlehem of  
 Judea, wise men from  
 the East came to  
 Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup> asking,  
 'Where is the child who  
 has been born king of  
 the Jews? For we  
 observed his star at its  
 rising, and have come to  
 pay him homage.'  
<sup>3</sup> When King Herod  
 heard this, he was  
 frightened, and all  
 Jerusalem with him;  
<sup>4</sup> and calling together all  
 the chief priests and  
 scribes of the people, he  
 inquired of them where

the Messiah was to be born. <sup>5</sup> They told him, 'In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

<sup>6</sup> "And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel."

<sup>7</sup> Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup> Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, 'Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.' <sup>9</sup> When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it

stopped over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup> When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. <sup>11</sup> On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure-chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. <sup>12</sup> And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

**Post Communion Prayer**  
Lord God,  
the bright splendour  
whom the nations seek:  
may we who with the  
wise men have been  
drawn by your light  
discern the glory of  
your presence in your  
Son, the Word made  
flesh, Jesus Christ our  
Lord.

## REFLECTION – Hazel O’Sullivan

Here we are at the start of a New Year. At this time each year, we remember the three wise men who were guided by a star. This is the Feast of Epiphany and it’s a way of taking the light and that joy of Christmas into the New Year. I wonder what you will take from Christmas this year to guide you through 2023.

It’s almost like we stand at a crossroad, and we have a choice of which direction to go:

- We can follow the ways of this world, and in this context, I hope that there is some good news to give you sustenance and to guide you during the year. You may have done a review of 2022 for inclusion in a Christmas letter. For example, my son graduated this year from his engineering degree and in September all my husband’s family met at his nephew’s wedding in Ireland – both of these were joyous occasions. Even if you haven’t had anything like this to report on, maybe you had some good food at Christmas that you can remember. Or maybe you have a joyful event coming up this year – maybe a significant birthday, the birth of a child or a new home.

The problem with following the ways of the world is that the joy and celebration of these events is quickly forgotten about.

- Another possible route at the crossroads is Christ’s way – way of the star. Down this route, there is always good news to tell. In this week’s reading from the letter to the Ephesians, Paul writes about being given God’s grace to pass on to others news of the riches and mystery of Christ. If I was to do a review of 2022 from the perspective of my meetings with Jesus, I’d tell someone about the retreat in February that I took which indicated that I wanted to get to know Jesus better, and then how my sabbatical in November gave me a taste of a contemplative life. Do ask me about either of these – they are both experiences that I’ll never forget, just as I’ll never forget that Jesus was born as God with Us and died so that we might have ‘overwhelming joy’.

I have illustrated how both these ways – the way of the world and Christ’s way - can lead us down a path of joy and celebration for the year ahead. I’d hope that when you experience something good, you want to tell others about it and so these events stretch some way further down that path of joy and celebration than just to the first week of the year, maybe producing some kind of positive transformation in you. I wonder, has anyone ever said to you, ‘Your face lit up when you told me about such and such’, or ‘When you came back from that retreat, or holiday, or church service, you seemed like a different person’?

This is exactly what happened to the three wise men. When they stood at a crossroads they had a choice of which direction to go in – the ways of the world, or Christ’s way. They’d been following this star for a very long time, and it had led them so close to Jerusalem that, at that point, they thought they knew the answer to the question “Where is the King?”. They thought this was obvious and that they’d meet a king by going straight for the royal palace where they’d be able to share in the joy and celebration that was going on.

When they got there of course, there wasn’t any celebrating happening. Even when they told King Herod that they were looking for a child who’d been born king of the Jews, he didn’t seem too happy at this news. He wasn’t prepared to hear the good news. I wonder if we’re sometimes in a similar situation, and shut our ears to good news at times. It’s easy to do, partly because the world is much better at telling us bad news - TV, newspapers and the internet bombard us with images of terror, violence, hunger, exploitation and misery. And, as well as national and global events which are happening and can make us oblivious to good news stories, we also have difficulties in our own lives which make hearing good news more problematic. We don’t want to deny that these bad things are happening, but let’s not allow them to block out something good that God might be doing at the same time. In our own community, we’ve had two recent deaths, so we might be alert at this time to more sad news than happy events. This is why it’s always helpful to remember that those who have died are now in a place where there’s no more crying or pain and we can be happy that they died with faith in Christ.

The wise men were distracted from following Christ’s way for a short time, but they got back on track and continued to follow the star. And when they finally got to Bethlehem they were transformed by their encounter with the infant Jesus. Meeting him changed their approach to their journeying, such that they returned home by another route.

Jesus Christ is the Light of the World. For so many people today, that light has already dimmed and they’ve not been transformed because they’re not following Christ’s way. We had so many in the churches at Christingle and Lighting the Lamps. Why was this? They were coming to see the light – a light that’s so desperately needed at this time. They were coming to meet with Jesus. And I pray that they all did take some of that light which he offers away with them. However, it is easy to get diverted off the path, as the Three Wise Men found out.

Jesus Christ is the Light of the World. He is Good News. We have something that the rest of the world does not have. Please do use our nativity scene (or one that you might have at home) to gain a sense of joy in Jesus Christ born on earth. The nativity scenes in the churches will stay up until 40 days after Christmas – a festival we call

Candlemas. And this is a time when we still remember Jesus as the Light of the World, through the candles that we bless and light on that day – candles to take us through the rest of the year. This is a way that recognises a longer lasting joy, which is to be celebrated.

What will guide you through 2023? Will it be the ways of this world, or will it be Jesus, the Light of the World, just like the star that lit up when Jesus was born and was the light which the wise men followed.

Later in the service we'll have an opportunity for you to recall moments in your life when you've felt yourself to be transformed in some way, or things that you are thankful for. I pray that this way of Christ is what will guide you during the year ahead, so that you can be transformed through any number of further encounters with Jesus. And if you're looking for opportunities to have these encounters, Richard suggested a few in his talk last week. I've included these in the pew sheet for this week for any of those who missed them.

Let's make 2023 a year of joy and celebration by following Christ's way – the way of the star.

### **Prayer Pointers**

Pray for guidance as we try to show the light of Christ. Pray for God's blessing on all who lead and teach Christians in this community. Pray that we may learn truth and be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit.

In the Southwark Diocesan Prayer Cycle, pray for ministers and congregations in the churches of Dulwich Deanery and for The Revd Canon Dr Martin Gainsborough who has recently been appointed as the new Bishop of Kingston

Pray for an end to street violence across London. Pray for the victim of the fatal stabbing in Peckham Rye and for the victims of the shooting in Camberwell, the stabbing in West Croydon and the stabbing in West Dulwich. Pray that those responsible may be brought to justice.

Pray that the leaders of countries around the world may understand the need for peace and for justice. Guide those with power to use it well and honestly. Hold before God the continuing war in Ukraine and for a just and peaceable solution.



Pray for all those working in the NHS especially those who work under extreme pressure in Accident and Emergency Departments.

Give thanks for all who have volunteered to staff the warm spaces in West Wickham and pray for those who have come in as they cannot afford to heat their homes.

Pray for those who have spent time over Christmas with family and friends, but are now back home alone, and perhaps lonely. Pray that they will remember that they are loved, by others and by God.

In our congregations pray for these who are experiencing ill health by name –Mark Outten, Vicky Pearce, Mike East, Pat Allegacone, Jane Smith (and her mother), Joan Burford, Graham Stone, Rowena Griffiths, Daphne Dack, John Dack, Barbara Goodchild, Karen Plummer, Miriam Richards and Mary Sanders – and those known to God alone.

Hold before God all those who have died in the faith of Christ crucified. Pray especially for Tony Goodchild and for Barbara and Tony's family, and for Barbara Plummer and for Katie and Barbara's family. Thank God for their examples of faithful service over many years in St Francis. May they hear their Master's voice saying 'Well done, good and faithful servants.'